

REPORT REPRINT

cloudtamer.io brings discipline to AWS and Azure deployments

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Summary

Cloudtamer.io offers a single portal to help organizations visualize, budget and enforce compliance across multiple public cloud workloads. The goal is to remove bottlenecks by putting responsibility for cloud governance where it can allow easy access to resources without sacrificing control.

451 TAKE

In a world that's transitioning some functions from monoliths to microservices, business processes haven't kept pace. Too often, legacy procedures for acquiring, configuring and paying for IT resources are bottlenecks to realizing the value and velocity of cloud-native tools. Cloudtamer.io strives to ease the way with a product that applies budget and policy constraints to hierarchical nodes across an organization's public cloud footprint. Rather than adding another management layer, it taps directly into the AWS and/or Azure console for self-service access to resources, then monitors and alerts stakeholders when usage or spending approaches user-defined thresholds. Cloudtamer.io has the virtue of tackling a vexing problem (siloes, spreadsheet-based governance for multiple public cloud accounts) in a defined space (AWS and Azure) by leveraging a familiar structure (organizational hierarchies).

Context

Cloudtamer.io's origin story is one you see often among cloud-native companies: a professional services firm (in this case, Stratus Solutions) partners with a cloud provider (AWS) to fulfill a requirement (in this case, from a US public sector agency) that results in a tool that can be applied across multiple customers and use cases. The offering has been in the works for about three years, and in mid-2018 it was released into general availability and cloudtamer.io became a separate company.

Governance and compliance is the biggest challenge facing enterprises when implementing cloud technology, cited by 58% of respondents in 451 Research's recent Voice of the Enterprise, Cloud Hosting & Managed Services: Workloads and Key Projects survey. Almost 21% of respondents plan to enlist outside professional services firms to deal with the issue.

Part of the difficulty is that organizations are using old-world processes to deal with new-world IT deployments. Cloudtamer.io sees part of its mission as evangelizing the benefit of distributing accountability away from slow-moving gatekeepers and further into the organization while providing visibility with continual cost estimates and enforcement of security and compliance rules.

The company was initially funded within Stratus Solutions as an internal R&D effort. It launched in 2018 as a separate entity with capital raised through a friends-and-family funding round and also closed a seed round in late 2018.

Products

Cloudtamer.io was developed to address three governance challenges: showing the current state of public cloud users and access rights across an enterprise for multiple accounts, setting and enforcing budget thresholds (in terms of usage and/or dollars) at a level that allows self-service convenience without overspending, and ensuring compliance with security and legal requirements.

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The key to cloudtamer.io's interface is the hierarchical structure used to propagate and customize access, budgets and policies; the hierarchy can be as wide or as deep as the customer requires. This allows stakeholders to view the organization's public cloud footprint in context for allocating resources and defining policies throughout the hierarchy. AWS and/or Azure accounts are aligned with nodes in the org chart; whenever an account is connected to cloudtamer.io, the individual services/resources being used become visible. Rather than acting as a service broker, cloudtamer.io allows native access to AWS or Azure via the console, command-line interface or APIs.

There are three primary views:

- Account management shows an organization's AWS and Azure footprint, with the ability to drill down and (with permissions) create accounts, make service requests and enable single sign-on via a corporate identity provider; multi-factor authentication is supported.
- Budget enforcement allows users to allocate funding sources to the various projects associated with public cloud accounts. Cloudtamer.io ties into the AWS APIs to estimate costs in real time, and administrators can set thresholds to trigger notifications, freeze spending and/or terminate resources based on this information.
- Compliance automation embodies a set of rules, with policies at higher levels inheritable to lower nodes in the hierarchy. There can be company- or department-wide policies to ensure that all instances are HIPAA-compliant, for example, but exemptions are possible on a per-account basis.

For AWS users, cloudtamer.io's objective is to package AWS's Governance@scale framework into an easy-to-understand interface, aggregating IAM policies, CloudFormation templates, AMIs and service catalog products into a single wrapper called Cloud Rules. Within Azure, Cloud Rules are extended to support RBAC Roles, Resource Templates and other Azure-native services to provide the same experience to the end user.

Business model

Cloudtamer.io says typical buyers are organizations whose multi-account deployments are growing at a rate that outpaces the ability of current staff to manage. This naturally includes businesses with moderate to high cloud spending and those subject to strict regulatory requirements such as HIPAA, FedRAMP or PCI. In terms of roles, the product targets senior leadership, which can view, enact and adjust financial oversight as adoption scales, as well as line managers and tech staff who want on-demand access to resources and built-in security and compliance so they can focus on business problems instead of cloud management.

The company markets to public sector and commercial organizations as well as managed service providers that need visibility and control across their accounts. It says that providers report greater customer satisfaction and faster adoption once cloudtamer.io's budgetary and compliance guardrails are in place.

The product is paid for with an annual platform subscription (which includes support and automatic updates) plus a percentage of cloud spending managed by the software; new customers can get started for as little as \$12,000 per year. Most buyers start out with a 30- to 60-day free trial.

Sales are made to customers directly or through a government reseller network. The company recently listed on the AWS Marketplace with a BYOL license, which will enable cloudtamer.io services to be bundled in on a customer's AWS bill; it also a free trial via the AWS Marketplace, and it plans to launch onto the Azure marketplace this year.

Cloudtamer.io has a few dozen customers, most of them public sector entities, and about 20 employees, all in the US. Most customers are solely using AWS with plans to support Azure in 2019 as they expand their cloud strategy.

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The company currently has sales partners that help reduce the friction of getting to customers. It is formally expanding its partner program in 2019 to include delivery partners and technology partners. Delivery partners help implement and configure cloudtamer.io within user environments and can capture follow-on professional services to help customers with other areas of cloud growth; technology partners offer complementary solutions that aim to deliver more together than the sum of their parts. A technology partner example is cloudtamer.io's tie-in with Telos Xacta 360, which provides governance, risk and compliance (GRC) validation and reporting while cloudtamer.io enforces established standards.

Competition

Cloudtamer.io replicates and in some cases relies on functions available natively in AWS and Azure (e.g., AWS Budgets and Cost Explorer, Azure Billing API) but differentiates by allowing customers to arrange public cloud accounts, spending and policies in a way that reflects the structure of the organization. The company sees its product as more business-oriented than cost optimization tools such as ParkMyCloud, DivvyCloud, GorillaStack, Skeddy, Spotinst and RightScale, and more suited to technical staff who are actually provisioning resources than cloud management platforms such as CloudHealth, Cloudability and CloudCheckr. Some platforms allow more granular inspection and controls, including Apptio, Teevity and Turbot, but these require more active configuration and management.

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

Cloudtamer.io addresses a high-profile challenge of cloud deployments: governance and compliance across dozens or even hundreds of AWS and Azure accounts. Native access to AWS and Azure consoles for basic functions ensures a low learning curve.

WEAKNESSES

The product's scope is limited to AWS and Azure, whereas many large organizations are also grappling with on-premises private cloud and legacy infrastructure and wish they could manage all with a 'single pane of glass.'

OPPORTUNITIES

With its focus on highly regulated environments and public sector background, cloudtamer.io can pursue enterprise customers in some lucrative verticals, either through direct sales or partnerships.

THREATS

As IT environments become more complex and diversified, competitors are approaching the governance opportunity from many directions and at many levels.